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TAGS: [GM](#) [EU](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [RU](#) [UNSC](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [UP](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN ADVANCE OF
THE NOVEMBER 16-17 EU GAERC

REF: STATE DEPARTMENT POINTS ON NOVEMBER 16-17 2009
GAERC TOPICS

Classified By: Deputy Political Minister Counselor Stan Otto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (C).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Germany largely supports the U.S. position laid out in refTel: continued engagement with Russia on difficult issues such as Iran and Georgia remains necessary, and the negative developments in Ukraine reinforce the need for Ukrainian leaders to work together. Despite a negative outlook on recent developments in Ukraine, Germany together with France and Poland plans to present a joint letter in Kyiv early next week, pleading with the leaders to cooperate.

However, German MFA sees little chance that the domestic situation in Ukraine will improve before the scheduled January presidential elections. On Russia, the MFA appears more upbeat, hoping that Russia will support stronger sanctions against Iran in the new year, and respond more proactively to U.S. efforts to push the "reset button." The MFA itself is waiting with bated breath to see what tone FM Westerwelle will set with Russia during his first trip as foreign minister to Moscow on November 20. END SUMMARY.

ADJUSTING TO A NEW FOREIGN MINISTER

12. (C) The coalition agreement between the Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) emphasizes the important role Russia plays "when dealing with regional and global challenges," but some within the MFA expect the new foreign minister to focus more on democracy, rule of law, and civil society, according to MFA Deputy Head of Division for Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus Henning Simon. Although no major policy change vis-a-vis Russia is anticipated, the MFA is preparing itself for a minister more openly critical of Russia. The MFA hopes that Westerwelle's short trip to Moscow on November 20 will provide clarification on what the new minister intends to emphasize during his tenure. Westerwelle has a confirmed meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and is still pursuing an appointment with President Medvedev.

GETTING RUSSIA TO MEET THE U.S. HALF WAY

13. (C) In preparing Westerwelle for his trip, the MFA division responsible for Russia is encouraging the foreign minister to convey German hopes that Russia engage the U.S. more actively in improving bilateral relations. Germany thus far has been "disappointed" by the Russian response following "significant U.S. policy changes." The MFA hopes that Westerwelle will agree to press Lavrov and possibly Medvedev to "not waste the opportunity the U.S. has offered." Germany frets that if Russia does not prove to be a more tractable partner for the U.S., the "U.S. will give up on or sideline Russia when possible." If Russia wants to maintain a significant role in world politics, they need to seize this

opportunity.

ENGAGING RUSSIA ON IRAN, GEORGIA

14. (C) More specifically, the MFA judges it likely that Russia will support stronger sanctions against Iran in the new year, assuming that Iran stays its current course. Indeed, the MFA appears ready to pressure Russia on this matter. On Georgia, the MFA views EUR A/S Gordon's participation in the Geneva Talks on November 11 as assuaging Russian and European concerns that America no longer viewed the Geneva Talks as significant. Although the MFA found the November 11 round to be "less than satisfying," the MFA supports the process as it presents the only forum where "we can engage Russia on these issues."

JOINT APPEAL TO UKRAINE

15. (C) Regarding Ukraine, the MFA agrees that the recent decision to increase wages and pensions was irresponsible, and fears that Kyiv's fiscal posture will soon reach a critical state. However, Germany sees "no chance that Ukraine's leaders finally work together." While expressing some skepticism that Kyiv would hold elections in January as planned, MFA contacts hope that Ukraine may prove to be a more responsible partner after the election. Despite this pessimistic outlook, Paris, Warsaw, and Berlin have prepared a joint letter to be delivered in Kyiv, in which they once again plead for Ukrainian leaders to cooperate.

COMMENT

16. (C) Those responsible for Russia policy in the MFA appear genuinely uncertain of what approach Westerwelle will take vis-a-vis Moscow, although they acknowledge it is unlikely to deviate greatly from the post-Cold War norm. While the pro-business FDP puts a strong emphasis on foreign economic interests -- and therefore good relations with Moscow -- it also prides itself on strong civil libertarian values, which may lead it to be more openly critical of internal Russian political and economic developments.

MURPHY